Everyone’s a Critic

The first national AIDS memorial

July 1, 2005 By Lucile Scott

National memorials that strive for more than the blandly heroic tend to inflame Americans, and the first national AIDS memorial, set to grace a 12-acre grove in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, is no exception. Big-name designers scoured 200 proposals before tapping one by New York architects Chloe Town and Jenette Kim that, so says Town,evokes a ravage-and-regrowth metaphor, using charred boards and carbon rods. But the true blaze roars among HIVers and critics. With the sponsoring National AIDS Memorial board reconvening June 8 for “further discussion,” *POZ* searched for higher meaning.

Chloe Town, memorial designer: “The experience of walking through the poles and natural regrowth make it a living memorial.”

Paul Graham, San Francisco resident: “This is definitely a poor choice. It doesn’t reflect the figures and faces that the virus has killed. ”

Mark Jarombek, MIT architecture professor: “The design abstracts a human biological problem. It could be about anything. Maybe it’s even an evasion of AIDS.”

Thom Weyland, HIVer/memorial board member: “We need to get on the national radar. Yes, it’s scary and controversial. AIDS is controversial.” —Lucile Scott

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